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Dr. Heather Stuart is a long-standing member of HSPRI and is the Bell Canada Chair in Mental Health & Anti-Stigma Research. Working with colleagues from the University of Calgary and the Mental Health Commission of Canada, she recently surveyed over 4,000 Canadians, half of whom had a mental illness, on attitudes toward mental illness. One of the most troubling findings of the survey was that 70% of those with mental illness experienced “shame and blame” associated with their condition. They felt: out of place, that people didn’t understand them, disappointed in themselves, inferior to others, and hopeless for the future.

Currently 1 in 4 Canadians experiences a mental disorder in any given year. Stigma about mental illness significantly limits opportunities for individuals and families. Dr. Stuart’s research group presented their report of the study to leaders in the Mental Health Commission of Canada as well as provincial government representatives, along with evidence for targeted community-based interventions to reverse internalized stigma. Several pilot projects are afoot in the Kingston area, with promising early results.



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